

GENDER AND DIGITAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

SHOW ME THE SAVINGS



The Service

Dnet¹, a social enterprise based in Bangladesh, launched *Aponjon* (meaning ‘the close/dear one’ in Bangla) in 2012. This service provides educational SMS messaging to new and expectant mothers, as well as other family decision-makers (particularly husbands and grandmothers) around pregnancy, birth and infant care.

To reach the potential clients, Dnet brokered partnerships with six outreach organizations, every mobile network operator in the country, and three large corporate partners.

After previously paying commissions to the outreach workers manually, Dnet decided to work with the mSTAR program² to digitize these payments to save on both time and costs. This has led to an extraordinary 75 percent reduction in time spent processing and collecting the payments, and a 77 percent reduction in the processing cost of the payments.³

Adaptations and Innovations

Payment System – To undertake the digitization of payments, *Aponjon* first needed to create a system that would contain historical information to calculate payments due to each person and include payment details. This system produces payment reports that are sent to each mobile payment partner when payments are made.

Training Manual – Though the outreach workers were already confident in using their mobiles for the *Aponjon* activities, this did not naturally lead to confidence in, or the ability to use, mobile money

1. <http://dnet.org.bd/> and <http://www.aponjon.com.bd/>

2. <https://www.fhi360.org/projects/mobile-solutions-technical-assistance-and-research-mstar>

3. For more a more detailed breakdown on savings from this project, see: https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Dnet_Payments_infographic_August2015.pdf

KEY FIGURES

Reduced internal payment processing time from 30 days to 8 days — that is by 14,612 person hours a year

Removed two layers of processing for each payment

Reduced the time spent on payment processing and collection by 75 percent

Reduced the cost of payments by 77 percent

1.8x return on investment in the first year

22.5 percent female youth unemployment rate

Money agents, the possibility of being issued fake notes, as well as making mistakes when transacting (and losing money). After extensive training, it was clear agents had trouble remembering PINs. It was decided to ask the women to remember a pattern (on a 3x3 keyboard) rather than the numbers, and this has worked well.

Partnerships – The *Aponjon* program is made up of many partners, and adding DFS partners needed to occur. The partners needed to work with *Aponjon* (and the new payment system) as well as the outreach workers to ensure a smooth transition.

How has the transition to digital payments added value to Dnet?

The reduction in cost and the willingness to adapt and learn has provided Dnet with a new payment model for their entire operation. DFS payments can now be embedded into programs at the initial stages, including any technical training required.

For the *Aponjon* agents, it has greatly reduced the delay between finishing work and receiving payment for that work. It has also added knowledge and new skills into their daily lives.

Further Opportunities

The success of this transition is now visible to the public and will be used to argue the point for the transition to DFS. As pressure is put on cost-reduction in development projects, this model could have wide application.

How this can apply to the Pacific Region

The Pacific region has many large-scale employers (such as mining, fisheries, governments, and so on) that are always looking for solutions to pay their workers in a timely, safe and secure manner. Although the transition to DFS has been discussed many times, the appropriate conditions with regard to cost, timeliness and the quality of the agent networks have not been present.

A DFS provider in the Pacific region may be able to fix the Agent Network and build a clear transition path for these employers at a huge savings of cost and time.

Additional Resources

https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/FinalEvaluation_Dnet_mSTAR_June2015.pdf

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